



Chiyoko Gueler, above at right and in picture at right, receives tea from Kayoko Sano, during a ceremony performed by the Boston branch of Urasenke, a 400-year-old tea school founded in Kyoto.

A taste of JAPAN



Rex Crum photo

Ritualistic tea ceremony brings country's culture to Duxbury

By Rex Crum
The Patriot Ledger

For many Americans, the only ceremony involved in making tea is dropping a paper tea bag into a cup of hot water and then trying to drink the liquid down without burning one's mouth or letting the tea get cold.

For the Japanese, however, tea is much more than a drink, and the tea ceremony goes beyond adding milk or sugar to the beverage; it is a performance.

The ceremony is a ritualistic exhibition of four elements at the core of Japanese culture: *Wa*, *Kei*, *Sei* and *Jaku*, meaning harmony, reverence, orderliness and tranquility. To experience the tea

ceremony is to be allowed a look into the complex yet simplistic and private world that is Japan.

It is not necessary to catch the next flight to Japan in order to see a tea ceremony. The Art Complex Museum in Duxbury is one of less than a handful of authentic Japanese tea huts in New

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Tea ceremony brings a taste of Japan

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England, said Boston Tea Master Alan Palmer Sosei. This summer, the Boston branch of Urasenke, a 400-year-old tea school founded in Kyoto, is giving monthly public performances of the Japanese tea ceremony. The next displays, which are outside, will be performed by Palmer and Urasenke members on July 28 and Aug. 25 at 2 p.m.

Art Complex Director Charles Weyerhauser said his parents, museum founders Carl and Edith Weyerhauser, and their friend Kojiro Tomita, a former Curator of Asian Art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, were responsible for the tea hut coming to Duxbury 21 years ago. "My parents went to Japan in the '60s with Kojiro Tomita and they were incredibly impressed with the tea ceremony. They decided they wanted to have some kind of display here at the complex.

"This tea house was built in Kyoto in 1969. My parents had it shipped over in parts and it was reassembled here in 1975," Weyerhauser said.

The performance of the tea ceremony has attracted a sizeable following since the first staging in 1975. A crowd of 60 to 70 people typically turn out for the monthly summer-time performances.

Named *Shofuan*, meaning, "Wind in the Pines Hut", the Duxbury teahouse is typical of those found in Japan. Two single sliding doors connect the tea room to the kitchen, where pre-ceremony preparations are made. Several types of wood and grasses are used to construct the building: cedar for the roof, small bamboo for the walls, and *tatami*, a combination of ground cypress and bamboo for the floor covering.

During a typical ceremony, which dates back four centuries, guests bide time in a special waiting room until the host comes out and rinses her or his hands and mouth, which symbolizes cleaning the body and mind. Guests are then greeted with a bow,

Take part in a ceremony

You can experience what taking part in a Japanese tea ceremony is like by joining Tea Master Alan Palmer Sosei in a two-session study group at the Art Complex Museum.

"The Art of Being a Guest at a Japanese Tea Ceremony" is a chance to join in the centuries-old tradition that is central to Japanese art and culture. Palmer will be hosting the group from 11 a.m. to noon Aug. 18 and 25.

Palmer will follow a formal ritual based on hospitality performed in a precise, traditional manner. Guests will gain an understanding of the philosophy, practices and protocol that will enable them to more fully appreciate the tea ceremony experience, Palmer said.

Participants in the group will have the opportunity to practice what they learn as honored guests at 2 p.m. during the Aug. 25 tea ceremony performance.

The workshop is offered in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the Art Complex Museum and the exhibition "Kindred Spirits — the Eloquence of Function in American Shaker and Japanese Arts Daily Life."

For information about fees and registration for the workshop, contact Bonnie Jennigan at the museum at (617) 934-6634.

which they return. No words are exchanged. After the guests and hosts greet each other, there is a routine of cleaning the tea scoop and container, offering and eating sweets and turning the tea bowl two times before finally drinking the tea.



Rex Crum photo

Kayoko Sano prepares tea while playing the hostess in a tea ceremony by Urasenke at the Art Complex Museum in Duxbury.

It is also important to admire all of the utensils as a sign of appreciation.

All this is done in the Japanese kneeling position with the knees on the floor.

Each ceremony has a particular theme represented by a hand-drawn calligraphy hung on one wall. The theme of the calligraphy during the June ceremony was "Waterfall," drawn by Aiko Rodgers Somi, who has been helping Urasenke perform the tea ceremony at the Art Complex Museum since 1975.

"Much of what is used in the ceremony is coordinated to the particular season of the year," said Rodgers, who narrated the ceremony, attended by about 70 people. "Special bowls and utensils are used to evoke coolness during the muggy months of summer, and to bring a feeling of warmth in wintertime. The waterfall is meant to be refreshing.

"In Japanese there is a saying 'Ichi-go, Ichi-e.' It means 'One time, One chance.' Every ceremony is meant to be a one-time experience," she said.

"Somi" is a title given to Rodgers by Urasenke Grandmaster Sen So-

shitsu, who received his title by being the 15th generation descendant of Sen Rikyu, the founder of Urasenke. Rodgers blushed when she translated the meaning into English.

"It means 'Beautiful Master.' I think Mr. Soshitsu was having fun when he gave me the name."

Rodgers, who lives in Marblehead, has been teaching the tea ceremony since 1981 and has given lessons at the Children's Museum, Harvard University and privately. Other Urasenke members taking part in the ceremony were Kayoko Sano, Chiyoko Gueler and Yoko Masuda.

The July ceremony is a special one for Urasenke as it marks the 21st anniversary of the Boston group's performances at the Duxbury tea house. Palmer, a former Urasenke representative, will be celebrating his 20th anniversary of performing the tea ceremony in August.

While the complete ceremony is publicly performed only during the summer months, the hut is open for viewing by request on Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m. For more information call the Art Complex Museum at (617) 934-6634.